

**WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS WEEK IN NORTH CAROLINA
DECEMBER 5-11, 2021**

Freezing rain and sleet dangers:

Ice falling in the form of freezing rain is particularly dangerous and poses a variety of problems. Freezing rain occurs when liquid precipitation, which could be rain or melted snow, strikes a surface that is below freezing. In this scenario temperatures at the surface are below freezing while at least a portion of the atmosphere is above freezing. The liquid precipitation freezes upon contact with the ground, trees, power lines and roadways.

The ability of freezing rain to accumulate on nearly every surface including trees, power lines, and bridges makes it one of the most dangerous forms of winter weather. As little as a quarter inch of freezing rain can create widespread power outages as experienced during the December ice storm of 2002, when nearly an inch of freezing rain brought down countless trees and power lines. Over one and half million people in North Carolina lost power during the 2002 ice storm.

Just small amounts of freezing rain can cover the pavement and especially bridges with a solid glaze of ice making driving extremely dangerous and nearly impossible. Over 85 percent of ice storm deaths are traffic related. Freezing rain will even accumulate on the steps and railings of your home making going out the door hazardous. Many injuries occur every year when people slip on ice.

Sleet can also be dangerous for motorists. Sleet forms when a raindrop falls and encounters freezing temperatures above the earth's surface and freezes into an ice pellet just before reaching the ground. Sleet can accumulate very efficiently on roads and sidewalks. Since sleet is a small solid ball of ice it usually accumulates more efficiently than snow. This is why sleet can make roadways and walkways very dangerous in just a short amount of time.

When driving, ice can be very difficult to recognize. The roadway may appear to be wet when in reality what appears to be water may actually be ice. If the temperature outside is below freezing, ice can form on the roads, especially on bridges and overpasses. When encountering ice, do not panic and do not stomp on your brakes. Striking your brakes will cause your car to slide into a skid. It is safer to slowly decelerate to a stop. Driving slow and defensively goes a long way when driving on ice and snow.

The National Weather Service issues Winter Storm Watches and Warnings when a quarter inch or more of freezing rain is forecast. Winter Storm Watches and Warnings are also issued when a half of an inch or more of sleet is expected. These watches and warnings are issued to help protect life and property, allowing local communities time to prepare for the winter weather. Winter Weather Advisories are issued when light accumulations of freezing rain or sleet less than a quarter of an inch are expected to cause travel problems and hazardous conditions.

Additional winter weather preparedness resources:

NWS winter safety page: https://www.weather.gov/wrn/winter_safety

North Carolina Department of Public Safety preparedness page: <http://readync.org>

FEMA's winter preparedness page: <https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>